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The Suffolk campaign a case study

Brian S. Wills

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THE SUFFOLK CAMPAIGN
A CASE STUDY

A thesis presented

by

Brian Steel Wills

to

Dr. Frances W. Gregory
History Department
University of Richmond

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the undergraduate degree of

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in the subject of

History

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Virginia

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"The Suffolk Campaign: A Case Study"

Brian S. Wills

"The Suffolk Campaign: A Case Study," covers the Civil War campaign that began on April 11, 1863 and ended on May 3, 1863 and centered around the small Tidewater Virginia town of Suffolk. Suffolk's strategic prominence was derived from its access to the James River, through a tributary (the Nansemond), and two major railroads which ran through the town--the Petersburg and Norfolk, and the Roanoke and Seaboard. The Confederates abandoned the town after McClellan's Peninsula Campaign made their position there untenable. Federal troops quickly entered Suffolk and established it as the first line of defense for Norfolk. Suffolk came under the military jurisdiction of the Confederate Department of Southern Virginia and North Carolina and the newly appointed commander, Lieutenant General James Longstreet.

The cruel winter of 1862/63 and the savage fighting of 1862, seriously depleted the quartermaster and commissary stores. Further, the lack of draft animals, cavalry horses, and fodder threatened to seriously impair the fighting efficiency of the Army of Northern Virginia. These shortages, coupled with a desire to protect and maintain coastal areas, vital military points, and the Confederate capital, provided the impetus for the Suffolk Campaign. These objectives underscored the basic missions under which Longstreet would operate:

- 1) protect the capital; 2) gather food, forage, and other supplies;
- 3) connect with Lee if called; and 3) capture Suffolk. Moreover, the missions demonstrated the diversity of the chain of command from which Longstreet received his orders (President Davis, Secretary of War Seddon, Adjutant General Cooper, and General Lee).

With the missions thus defined, Longstreet advanced against the Federal garrison at Suffolk. During the advance, several incidents illustrated the "humanity" of war, particularly General Hood's social and General Pickett's romantic affairs. Yet, a far more controversial phenomenon at this time was the correspondence between Lee and Longstreet. Many of the criticisms of Longstreet's character stem from this correspondence.

The activity of the Federal garrison at Suffolk continued to reflect the daily routine of occupation. This routine included reconnaissances, picket duty, guard duty, fatigue duty, and foraging. However, the diligent Union commander, General John Peck could sense eminent danger and moved to detect and forestall the threat.

The threat that materialized on April 11 again illustrated the "humanity" and the "inhumanity" of war. As tension mounted, in-fighting took place in both Confederate and Union forces. Skirmishing also developed which led to the major action of the war--the Confederate loss of Fort Huger and 137 men. As a result, several Confederate officers challenged each other and met on the field of honor. The siege culminated in the retreat of Longstreet's forces and the continuation of Federal occupation.

However, the real results of the Suffolk Campaign were the losses of homes, churches, and private lives. For the civilians it was a harrowing view of war at close hand. For the soldiers it was one more brush with death, a hospital, or a prison camp. Despite the fact that Suffolk was eclipsed by the battle of Chancellorsville and the death there of "Stonewall" Jackson, the campaign was nonetheless important for those who fought, lived, or died there.

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CHAPTER I

The Stage Is Set

For many people in the small Tidewater community of Suffolk and the surrounding countryside of Nansemond County, April 12, 1861 dawned, in much the same way the relatively quiet days of the past had done. Few of these predominately agricultural people could have realized that the day would usher in a traumatic war that would last for four long years and touch the lives of nearly every American; further, that in just over a year their community would be occupied by the enemy, fortified, and placed under siege by the Confederate forces. For these people, as with others throughout both the United States and the Confederate States, the war was to become a rude awakening from their hopes and routines.

For the time being, the people of Suffolk and Nansemond County responded to the action at Fort Sumter in much the same way that their brethren in both North and South did. War fever, the opportunity for adventure, peer pressure, and countless other causes enabled the community to raise nine companies of infantry and cavalry to serve under the Confederate banner which boasted some 1,500 men. Carrying such names as the Suffolk Continentals, the Marion Rangers, the Nansemond Guards, the Nansemond Rangers,¹ the companies were reminiscent of the Revolution of 1776. The citizens of Suffolk and Nansemond watched their young men march off to this new fight for independence.

Even though Suffolk hardly swayed the entire strategic course of the war, the town's location did bring a large amount of attention that it might not otherwise have received. The town of Suffolk and the county of Nansemond lie in the Tidewater or Southeastern coastal plain of Virginia. The town sits at the source of the Nansemond

River, a major tributary of the James River. Two railroads, the Petersburg and Norfolk, and the Roanoke and Seaboard, turned the town into a major rail center for the region. The town had a considerable share of the commerce coming in from North Carolina's Eastern regions as well as the commerce coming in from Norfolk. Suffolk also had access to the James River's, Nansemond River's and Chesapeake Bay's fishing and oyster reserves. Nansemond County boasted a large and fertile agricultural region that supplied such products as beef, hams, peanuts, bacon, and corn. Union Major General John J. Peck recognized the strategic importance of Suffolk to the war effort, saying in his May 5, 1863 report, "Suffolk is the key to all approaches to the mouth of the James River on the North of the Dismal Swamp." In fact, General Peck considered the James River, "second only in importance to the Mississippi for the Confederates."²

Thus from early in the war Suffolk became the object of numerous expeditions, scouts, and reconnaissances. The Confederates evacuated Suffolk on May 10, 1862. Two days later, Federal cavalry under the command of Colonel Charles C. Dodge (First New York Mounted Rifles) rode into the community. Mrs. Emma L.M. Ferguson, an eyewitness, wrote:

The people were greatly frightened at first by all kinds of reports that were soon in circulation. Some said that they were going to take all male citizens as prisoners, others that they intended to hang certain citizens for some alleged offence, etc.. The people kept close within their houses and watched the movements of the soldiers through the shudders. This being the first appearance of the enemy in our midst it was not strange that the quiet people of our little town

should be alarmed, until it was ascertained that they were making no arrests and disturbing nothing. The Yankees had been pictured to the children in the most horrible form, and many of them were very much surprised when they found out they did not differ from other men. 3

Children were not the only ones intimidated by these stories. Adults were also susceptible to them. Just before Dodge and his Federal troopers rode into Suffolk, some of the more unscrupulous citizens spread stories that the Yankees were pillaging, stealing, and burning. These citizens offered everyone with stock, food, merchandise, and other supplies between twenty-five and fifty per cent on the dollar in Confederate currency. The materials gained from these unwitting participants were, in turn, sold to the invading army for enormous profits in more sturdy United States currency. 4

The Federal presence in Suffolk would not actually be contested until almost a year later. In the meantime, Confederates on the far side of the Blackwater River, a natural defense line on the border of Nansemond County, carried on a guerrilla war with the Union forces in Suffolk. These Confederates continuously crossed the Blackwater to forage, scout, and harass the Federals. Often these crossings resulted in skirmishes. The heaviest of these confrontations occurred on January 29, 1863, and has been named the Battle of Kelly's Store or Deserted House. Both Union forces under General Peck and Confederate forces under General Roger A. Pryor claimed victory in the engagement. The price was 143 Union casualties and 39 Confederate casualties, with no strategic or tactical advantage to either side. This, however, was

only a foretaste of the events that were destined to occur later in the spring.

The area that was being fought over lay in the Confederate Department of Southern Virginia and North Carolina. This department was territorially too large for one commander to control and had to be effectively broken into three separate sub-departments, each with its own commander. In the Spring of 1863, after the resignation of the previous commander, Lieutenant General James Longstreet took command of the Department of Southern Virginia and North Carolina. The commanders of the sub-departments were: General Arnold Elzey (The Department of Richmond), General Samuel G. French (The Department of Southern Virginia), and General Daniel Harvey Hill (The Department of North Carolina). Of the other commanders under General Longstreet's immediate command, the most important were: Generals W.H.C. Whiting, in command of the important port city of Wilmington, "Shank" Evans, Robert Ransom, Johnston Pettigrew, and Beverly Robertson.

Each of the commanders Longstreet had to deal with had his own peculiarities. General Hill was in ill health that made him morose. General Whiting was cronicallly apprehensive. General Elzey had a disfiguring face wound and was addicted to the bottle. General Robertson was accused of inefficiency by General Hill. In short, though these men might possess military capabilities, they were temperamentally more difficult than the average of the Army.⁵ Some of Longstreet's lieutenants may correctly be considered malcontents.⁶ However, regardless of their personalities, Longstreet had to work

with them.

Besides bringing a change of leadership in the Department of Southern Virginia and North Carolina, the winter of 1862/63 brought the first ominous signs of circumstances and events that would bring the war to Suffolk. The first vestiges of the shortages in food were being felt, coupled with inflation that made prices difficult to pay if food could be found. John B. Jones expressed the view of the average person on the issue of food and inflation in his famous diary. "Yesterday [January 16] beef sold for 40¢ per pound; today it is 60¢."⁷ On February 1 he charted the differences in grocery bills before the war and those in 1863.* On March 31 he noted that cornmeal had increased to \$17.00 a bushel, up \$5.00 from the previous day's price of \$12.00."⁸

Civilians were not the only ones suffering. Quartermaster supplies such as shoes and blankets were in critically short supply for the soldiers. "The cruel shortage of provisions was sharpened by the severities of an unusually bleak and frigid winter."⁹ The Quartermaster experts "anticipated supplying shoes through the winter at least,"¹⁰ belying the fact that the reserves were being used up. On April 1 a bread riot in Richmond had to be quelled by the hungry soldiers themselves, with the help of President Davis. General Lee had to send his cavalry "into Loudon County to bring off commissary's and quartermaster's stores."¹¹ Thus the normal pursuits of reconnaissances and scouts had to be precluded by the cavalry to assist

* See the appendix.

in finding food for the army. Even military operations were diverted to facilitate the gathering of provisions and to supplement the government agents in collecting cattle. "The commander of a proposed expedition to cut the B. & O. R.R. was told that the meat he might bring back was as important as the damage he might inflict."¹² General G. Moxley Sorrel, Longstreet's Assistant Adjutant General, wrote, "Our army was in want of all supplies."¹³ Lee again attempted to mitigate the food shortage by sending his troops into the neighboring countryside to gather wild foods. In so doing he also hoped to avoid scurvy.¹⁴

While the shortage of food and supplies and the inflated prices plagued the army and the civilians, the shortage of draft animals, artillery and cavalry horses, and fodder threatened the effectiveness of the army as a fighting unit. Inspector General of Field Transportation, Major A.H. Cole, under the orders of the Quartermaster, reported to the Secretary of War early in 1863 that the number of horses in the possession of the Confederate Government was "just barely enough to get on with."¹⁵ This posed an extremely dangerous situation for an army that relied on the horse and the mule for all of its transportation needs, especially the artillery arm of the service. Compounding the basic shortage of horses and draft animals was the lack of forage, which threatened to starve those animals spared from the fighting. "As early as May 1862 the fodder shortage in Virginia was particularly acute."¹⁶ Thus the entire Army of Northern Virginia was forced to look beyond the state of Virginia for proper fodder to feed the diminishing number of animals from

which it could draw. "...the supply of forage had run out for the Army of Northern Virginia by the winter of 1862/63. By February the situation had reached crisis proportions, and Lee had to scatter his cavalry so widely to subsist the animals as to render it almost useless."¹⁷ *

These were not the only concerns that faced Lee, Davis, and the Confederacy. Prominent North Carolinians, among them Governor Zebulon Vance, were calling for the protection of their states and were demanding additional troops. General Pierre G.T. Beauregard at Charleston, South Carolina, was anxious about the coasts of both Carolinas. In Wilmington, General Whiting feared that each new day would bring the Federal navy at the door of the port in force. "Every commander had a theory; almost every guardian of an important post believed that his was the most endangered."¹⁸ And the official dispatches of the many "guardians" in the Virginia-North Carolina region reflect this apprehension and anxiety. Unfortunately, the effect these repeated dispatches had on Richmond was to confuse and worry the Confederate authorities.

Along with these problems, official Richmond also had to be concerned with the protection of the capital. Lee and his army offered protection from three directions, at their present position, but could not be expected to protect Petersburg, the key to Richmond's supply needs, and Richmond itself, from the South, without dispatching troops for that express purpose. The authorities felt safe from every approach except the Southern one.

*Richard D. Goff, author, Confederate Supply

under the orders of four different individuals: President Davis, General Lee, Secretary of War James A. Seddon, and Adjutant General Samuel Cooper. This of course tended to complicate the chain of command for Longstreet. It also gave Longstreet four different missions. President Davis wanted him to protect the southern and southeastern approaches to Richmond. Secretary Seddon and General Cooper wanted him to drive the Federal forces out of their garrisons in southeastern Virginia and north-central North Carolina, or at least to hold them there while his men gathered and secured all food stocks, forage, and other quartermaster supplies they could find. General Lee asked Longstreet to be prepared to connect with the Army of Northern Virginia if needed. Finally, Secretary Seddon explicitly, and General Lee implicitly wanted Longstreet to capture Suffolk if he could.²¹ Fortunately, Longstreet could accomplish most of these missions simultaneously, simply by attacking Suffolk.

CHAPTER II

The Confederates Close In

With the missions thus defined, Confederate Generals Longstreet, Pickett, and Hood moved through Richmond towards Petersburg. For a short time, the troops camped between Richmond and Petersburg, before marching on against the Federals at Suffolk. Longstreet hoped in this way to accommodate Lee's fear of attack from Hooker and the Army of the Potomac by remaining within easy marching distance of Lee's army on the Anna Rivers, north of Richmond. Thus he could fulfill Lee's mission of connecting with the Army of Northern Virginia if needed.

While in camp between Richmond and Petersburg, Hood's men were involved in a series of mischevious incidents. The men needed hats and as a railroad ran through the middle of the camp, they designed an ingenious way of satisfying their need. As trains slowed to cross a trestle, the men would gather and yell, making such a great amount of noise that people on the train would thrust their heads out of the windows to see what was happening. In the meantime, men stationed along the tracks with pine boughs would knock the hats from the heads of the unsuspecting travelers. This system worked fine until, "one day a brigadier general, his staff, and several members of Congress were the victims." Word of displeasure found its way down to Hood, who had his men halt their activities.²²

General Hood himself took advantage of the respite in marching and fighting. The gallant Texan was invited to the most socially important parties in the capital. He went to the parties of President and Mrs. Davis and Mrs. General Joseph Johnston. Hood was a man who loved lights and laughter and who enjoyed his reputation as man who had a "magnificent physique, cordial manners, and the suavity

of a cavalier."²³ Later, when his troops sat entrenched on the outskirts of Suffolk, he would miss the exciting life of Richmond.

Yet another of Longstreet's lieutenants, Pickett, had his own concerns as the Confederates awaited the move on Suffolk. He was a thirty-eight year old widower who had fallen in love with a girl half his age. Pickett wrote a letter to his future wife in February, hinting at the upcoming Suffolk campaign. "Perhaps, sweetheart, perhaps I say, you will see your soldier sooner than you think."²⁴ The recipient of the letter was Sallie Corbell, a native of Chuckatuck, a small village in Nansemond County. During the siege, Pickett, whose command was stationed at the opposite extreme of the lines from Chuckatuck, made frequent visits to see her. These visits were made with the permission of Longstreet and were applied for so frequently that Pickett feared he was overstretching his license. He decided to go to General Sorrel (Longstreet's Adjutant General) instead, for the necessary permission. Sorrel recalled:

Perhaps he had wearied Longstreet by frequent applications to be absent, but once he came to me for the authority. My answer was, 'No, you must go to the Lieutenant General.'

'But he is tired of it, and will refuse; and I must go, I must see her. I swear, Sorrel, I'll be back before anything can happen in the morning.'

I could not permit myself to be moved. If anything did happen, such as a movement of his division or any demonstration against it, my responsibilities for the absence of the Major General could not be explained. But Pickett went all the same, nothing could hold him back from that pursuit. 25

However, for the time being, Pickett had to content himself with a letter hinting at his imminent approach.

With his subordinates thus occupied, Longstreet began a series of communications with Lee that would eventually lead to the investment of Suffolk. On March 27, letters between Lee and Longstreet crossed each other in the mail. Lee left the decision to attack Suffolk up to his lieutenant. Longstreet, in turn, intimated that he might indeed attack the town. At least a foot of snow had fallen on central Virginia the week before, precluding the major offensive of the Union army that Lee feared most. Still, the fear of such an attack forced Longstreet to hold a number of his men in reserve in the event that Lee should need them. With such reduced numbers, Longstreet was afraid to attack Suffolk. Indeed, Longstreet's dispatches are filled with doubts about an attack on Suffolk without having more men.²⁶

In the meantime, the Federals in Suffolk kept up their fortifications and garrison duty. The garrison size was more than tripled, from 5,326 on September 10, 1862 to 20,000 in 1863.²⁷ * As an outpost, the Federal troops in the town had to be employed daily in picket and fatigue duty, patrols and reconnaissances. The most tedious work for the soldiers was keeping up the fortifications. Often the veterans made light of the work. "A soldier in a New Hampshire regiment, while wearily digging during the small hours of the morning, was heard to remark to his neighbor: 'I say, Bill! I hope 'Old Peck' will die two weeks before I do.'

* The trimonthly report for the Department of Virginia-March 31, 1863, shows the number of Federal troops in Suffolk to be: 17,599 infantry, 2,255 cavalry, 1,254 artillery and 44 guns equalling a total of 21,108 combat troops.

'Why so?' queried his friend.

'Because he'll have hell so strongly fortified that I can't get in,' was the irreverent reply."²⁸

Besides the digging that was an intergral part of the soldier's life, the Federals in Suffolk also had to keep a wary eye on the Confederates just across the Blackwater River, lest Longstreet join them suddenly and engulf the town. General Peck had the difficult task of trying to figure out Longstreet's position and intentions, and he used every means at his disposal to do so. Peck used various Confederate newspapers for information. In March he gleaned information from the Charleston Mercury that told him that Longstreet and 15,000 men had passed through Richmond.²⁹ He also used deserters as devices for information gathering.³⁰ Peck seems to have guarded against the practice of sending out "deserters" with false information by questioning the accuracy of these rumors.

Early in March, General Longstreet received orders from Secretary Seddon to move against Suffolk and capture the town, "if you think it advisable and it can be done with advantage..."³¹ This action was to be used to seize supplies and quartermaster stores that had been previously held in Union controlled territory and to protect the important rail lines leading from the South into Petersburg and Richmond. Longstreet was having difficulty with the mission of supporting the Army of Northern Virginia. He had some idea of the size of the Federal garrison in Suffolk, as well as the number of Federal troops in North Carolina and Fortress Monroe and knew that these forces were too large to be dealt with easily unless he could commit all of the troops at his disposal. This meant that

the troops he was holding in reserve for Lee's benefit would have to be committed, as well as any other troops Lee could send him. Since his mission was not only to capture Suffolk, or at least to hold the Federal garrison inside the town, but also to gather supplies, Longstreet knew that he had to have enough troops to hold the Federals at bay and gather supplies, simultaneously. Longstreet wrote Lee on March 19 addressing these problems.³²

Again Longstreet's and Lee's communications crossed, on March 19. Lee's letter directed his "War Horse" to turn all of his energies to obtaining supplies, subsistence, and forage for the army.³³ Longstreet answered on March 21 that he was "doing all to draw supplies from the eastern portion of North Carolina."³⁴ Three days later, Longstreet wrote Lee that he had sent his Corps Commissary, Major Raphael J. Moses, into North Carolina to access the supply situation there. Moses found that the supplies were abundant, but in areas controlled by the Union forces. Longstreet again asked Lee the question of attacking Suffolk, registering his own concerns about the size of the Federal forces in the town and nearby.³⁵

Longstreet still had questions he felt were unresolved. He wanted a redefinition of his primary mission, more troops, and Lee's direct orders to attack Suffolk. The extreme caution that surrounded all of his decisions was shown clearly in these needs. Lee's reply of March 27 answered many of these questions. Lee stated clearly Longstreet's primary mission, while registering his own fears that the dormant Army of the Potomac would strike while Longstreet was

away. "I consider it of the first importance to draw from the invaded districts every pound of provisions and forage we can." Lee was reluctant, however, to send any more troops from the main army, lest Hooker should move against him. Lee felt that by all reports the Federal forces before Longstreet were only equal at best and most likely inferior in numbers to Longstreet's own forces. Lee was certain that the tasks before Longstreet could be accomplished without additional men. Finally, Lee advised Longstreet concerning an attack on Suffolk. "A sudden, vigorous attack on Suffolk would doubtless give you that place." But Lee was unwilling to order the attack since he felt Longstreet was in the best position to judge on the matter.³⁶

Longstreet again wrote Lee on March 30 that "all the spare troops in the field" are "hauling in bacon and other supplies." Longstreet saw only the swift movement of his larger forces as an advantage to attacking Suffolk, but was clearly not ruling out the move. He hinted at such a move by stating that since his men held both sides of the Blackwater River he could cross it at any point.³⁷ As March drew to a close, both Confederate and Union generals filled their dispatches with calls for more men and supplies in the ever increasing likelihood of a confrontation that threatened to center around Suffolk.³⁸

The coming of April did not bring a change in weather, which remained generally inclement. Several more inches of snow fell on Richmond and Central Virginia, on April 5. In the Suffolk area, cold and blustery weather pervaded for the first week of April.³⁹ Despite this weather, General Longstreet prepared for a march

against the Union forces at Suffolk. He planned to hold the garrison inside Suffolk if he could not quickly capture it. Longstreet was having difficulty with "indifferent" transportation and feared that this, coupled with Union sympathizers in the area who might reveal his movement, would jeopardize a quick surprise attack.⁴⁰

Longstreet sent word to Lee that he would cross the Blackwater as soon as adequate crossings had been built. He was anxious to move as quickly as possible and asked for support from the Confederate Navy.⁴¹ The next day Longstreet again wrote Lee, "I hope to be able to cross the Blackwater on Wednesday or Thursday next and to get what supplies there are east of that stream and, if I find it possible, to make an effort to get that garrison [Peck's]".⁴² Thus Longstreet was projecting the assault to begin on either April 8 or 9.

In conjunction with a move on Suffolk, Longstreet kept in contact with the local commander on the Blackwater, Brigadier General M. Jenkins. Jenkins sent all of the information he had on the Union garrison and a map of the roads of the region to Longstreet on April 4.⁴³ Two days later Jenkins wrote that he estimated the force in Suffolk to be between 12,000 and 15,000. He further wrote exhorting Longstreet, "If you succeed in capturing them [the Union garrison] it will be the most brilliant affair of the war and would be attended by glorious results to the cause."⁴⁴ Longstreet replied simply to the enthusiastic commander, "I desire that you have your command in readiness to cross the Blackwater on Friday."⁴⁵ The timetable for the

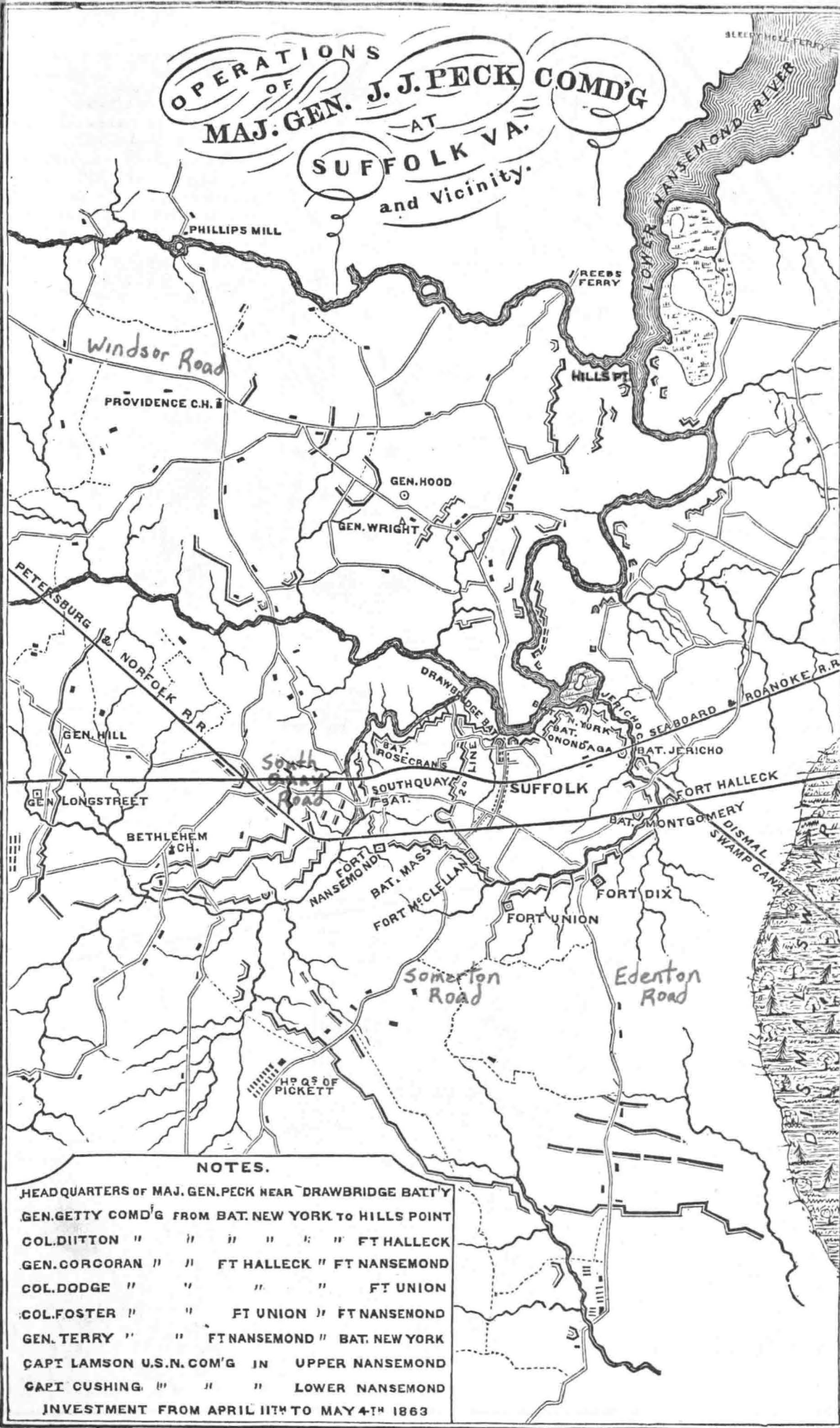
assault had to be further delayed until Saturday, April 11.

Four days before Longstreet proposed to cross the Blackwater and move on Suffolk, Secretary of War Seddon sent him a message informing him of the inability of the Navy to cooperate with his attack in time to be of assistance. Longstreet had been reluctant initially to move until he had Naval cooperation to offset the Union Navy in the Nansemond. The Secretary advised him to proceed with the operation without the Navy. And Longstreet, who had already committed himself to an assault timetable, could not justify terminating the operation.⁴⁶ Longstreet wrote Lee regarding the matter and stated that he had decided to do nothing more than gather and draw out the supplies from the region and would refrain from an all-out assault unless the opportunity should offer itself. Longstreet also informed Lee of his timetable, "Saturday, possibly not before Sunday."⁴⁷

Meanwhile, the Union forces under General Peck were largely unaware of the large Confederate force and the impending attack. General Peck himself was not made aware of Longstreet's threatening plans until April 10, just the day before the one Longstreet had established as the starting date for the assault. Near the end of the 10th the contents of captured Confederate mail were sent to Peck, "to the effect that General Longstreet would attack me at once with from 40,000 to 60,000; that he had maps, plans, and a statement of my force, and that General Hill would cooperate."⁴⁸ General Peck received this information right at the moment that reinforcements, numbering about 3,000, were embarking on a train to go into North Carolina.

With this advance knowledge of the Confederate intentions, Peck was able to recall the troops and prepare for the Confederate advance that would soon be coming.

OPERATIONS
OF
MAJ. GEN. J. J. PECK COMD'G
AT
SUFFOLK VA.
and Vicinity.



NOTES.

HEADQUARTERS OF MAJ. GEN. PECK NEAR DRAWBRIDGE BATT'Y
 GEN. GETTY COMD'G FROM BAT. NEW YORK TO HILLS POINT
 COL. DITTON " " " " " FT HALLECK
 GEN. GORCORAN " " FT HALLECK " FT NANSEMOND
 COL. DODGE " " " " " FT UNION
 COL. FOSTER " " FT UNION " FT NANSEMOND
 GEN. TERRY " " FT NANSEMOND " BAT. NEW YORK
 CAPT LAMSON U.S.N. COM'G IN UPPER NANSEMOND
 CAPT CUSHING " " " " " LOWER NANSEMOND
 INVESTMENT FROM APRIL 11TH TO MAY 4TH 1863

MAP OF SUFFOLK AND VICINITY

Giving location of Regiments,
Batteries, etc. while occupied
as a Military Post, just
previous to the Siege of
Gen Longstreet, in Spring, 1863.

COMPILED AND DRAWN BY
CAPT. E. A. CURTIS

11274 N.Y.S. VOLS. CO. D

Scale 6667 Ft. = 1 in.



Cut
Timber

Cut Timber

2nd Wis
Battery

Ft. Peck

Wino 16 M
CHUCKATUCK R

Draw
Bridge
Clark's Office

Court Jail

Gen Pecks
Hd. Qrs.

Church

Trans. Mar. Hall

Dept. B.E. Ch.

Signal Tower

Saptist Ch.

Bank

Hotel

Gen Foster's
Hd. Qrs.

Church

Stores

Guard

Dept.

Secesh House

Corporation Line

7th Wis. Battery

11th Pa

Hospital

16th Pa

112th N.Y.

Second Position

17th Indiana

Ft. M'Gillan

Sumner Road

16th Pa

112th N.Y.

Second Position

17th Indiana

Ft. M'Gillan

Sumner Road

16th Pa

112th N.Y.

Second Position

17th Indiana

SEABOARD & ROANOKE RIVER

4th U.S. Battery

99th N.Y. 130th N.Y. 167th Pa.

7th Mass. Hospital

7th Mass. Battery

112th N.Y. 1st. Position

Pontoon Corps

Field

South Quay Batteries

6th Mass.

7th Pa.

Sally Port

Ft. M'Gillan

Sumner Road

16th Pa

112th N.Y.

Second Position

17th Indiana

Ft. M'Gillan

Sumner Road

16th Pa

112th N.Y.

Second Position

17th Indiana

Ft. M'Gillan

Sumner Road

16th Pa

112th N.Y.

Second Position

17th Indiana

Ft. M'Gillan

Sumner Road

FRANKLIN 15 MILES

Savage's
Mill Pond

Dem.

23 mi.

Cut Timber

KIBBY'S
MILL POND

Field

South Quay

6th Mass.

7th Pa.

Sally Port

Ft. M'Gillan

Sumner Road

16th Pa

112th N.Y.

Second Position

17th Indiana

Ft. M'Gillan

Sumner Road

16th Pa

112th N.Y.

Second Position

17th Indiana

Ft. M'Gillan

Sumner Road

16th Pa

112th N.Y.

Second Position

17th Indiana

Ft. M'Gillan

Sumner Road

16th Pa

112th N.Y.

Second Position

17th Indiana

Ft. M'Gillan

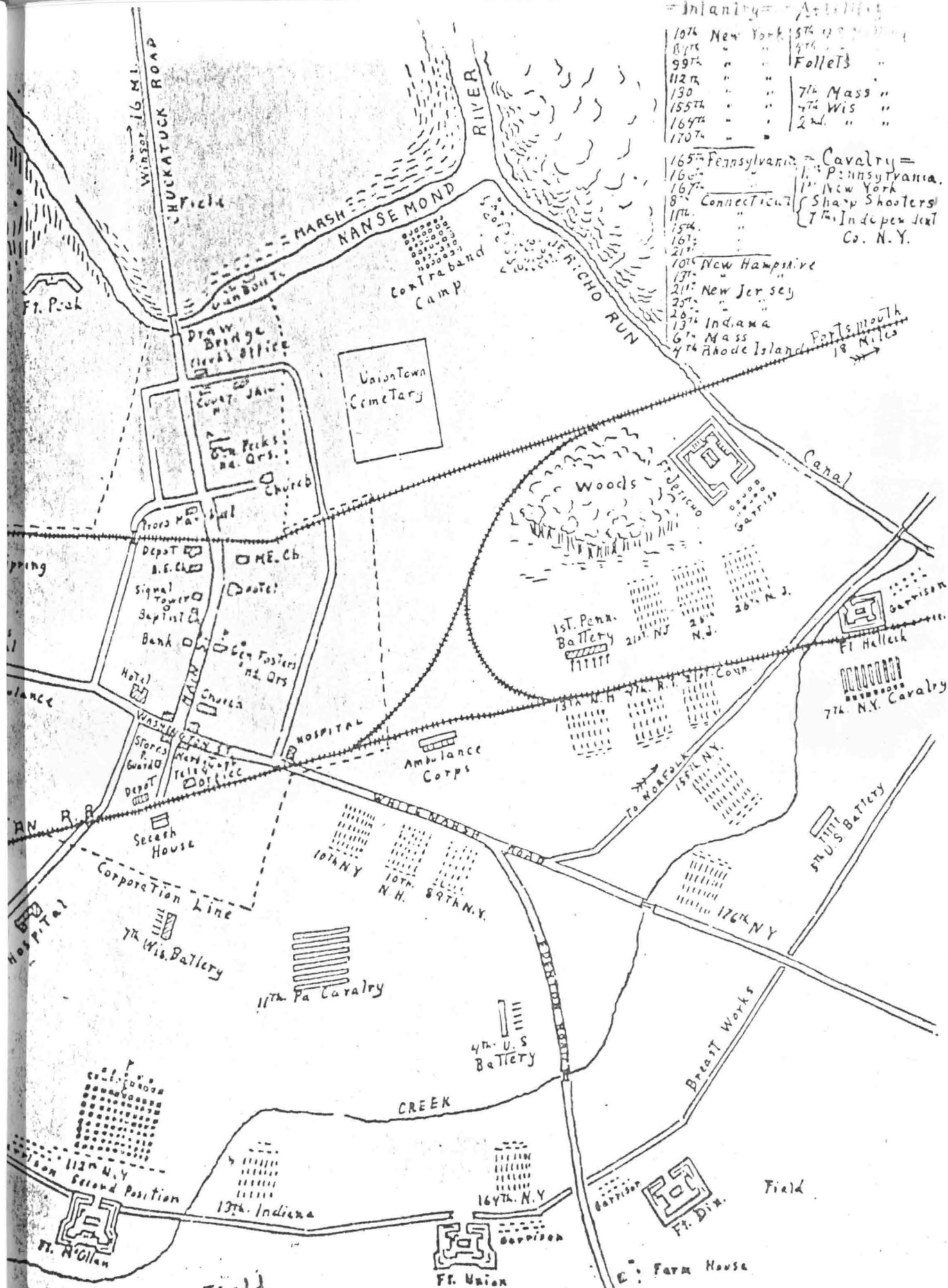
Sumner Road

16th Pa

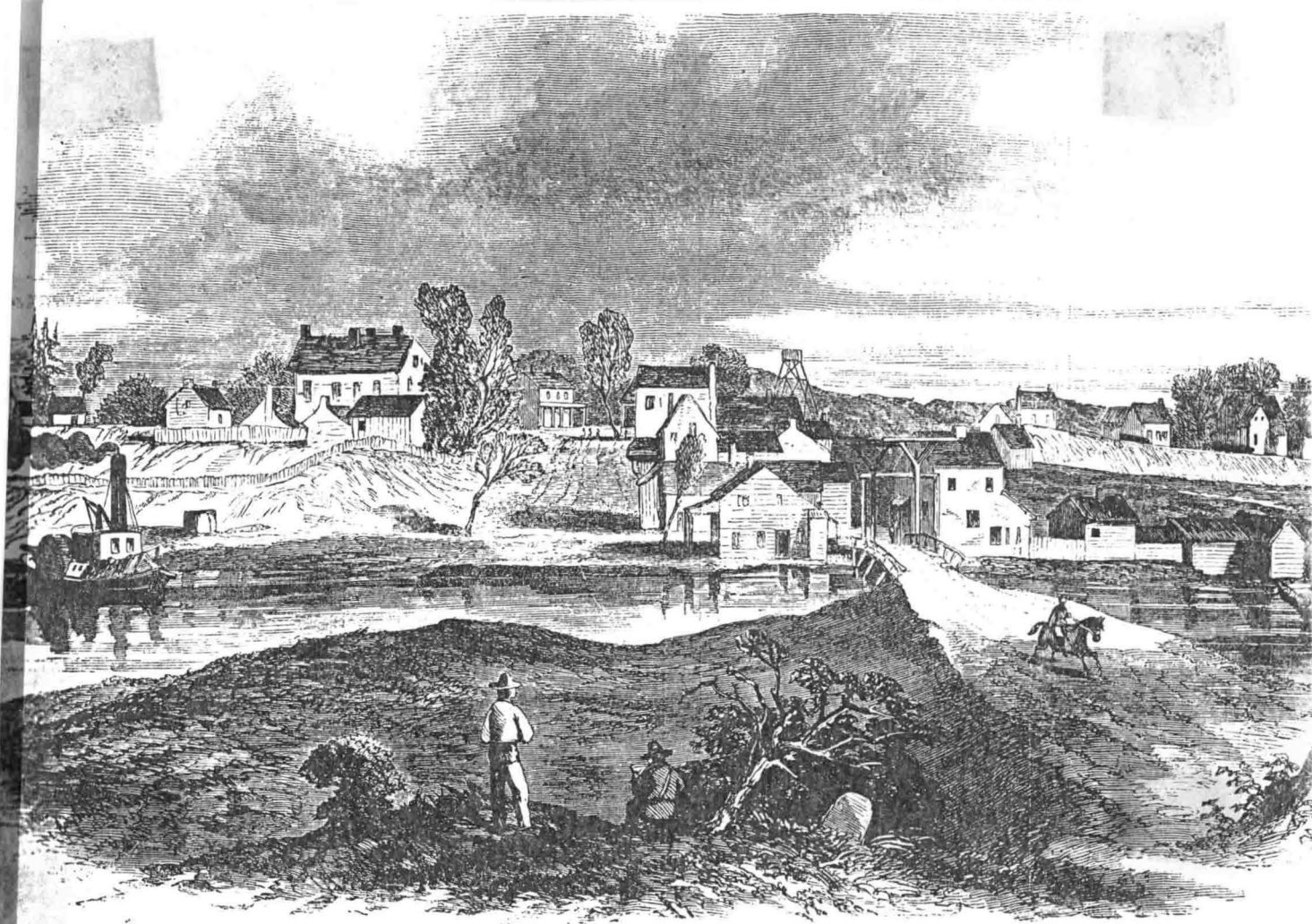
Brigade Review Field.

165th Pennsylvania Cavalry =
 166th " 1st Pennsylvania
 167th " 1st New York
 8th Connecticut { Sharpshooters
 17th " { Independent
 154th " { Co. N.Y.
 167th "
 21st "
 101st New Hampshire
 131st "
 211st New Jersey
 23rd "
 20th "
 137th Indiana
 6th Mass
 74th Rhode Island

Portsmouth
 18 Miles



Brigade Review Field.



This is a view of wartime Suffolk looking south across the Nansemond River. The road in the foreground is the Providence Church or the Windsor Road. On May 3, Union troops crossed the draw bridge in the foreground to attack the Confederate lines.

(picture courtesy-Civil War Times Illustrated)

CHAPTER III
THE SIEGE OF SUFFOLK

The Siege of Suffolk opened militarily on April 11, 1863, a lovely spring Saturday. ⁴⁹ Chief Signal Officer Charles L. Davis had a signal station on a tree on the South Quay and Carrsville Roads. He wrote later, "At 3:30 P.M. April 11 a contraband* reported to the officer [Lieutenant Thayer] on duty at this station that the enemy was advancing in force on both roads and only a few miles distant." This news was immediately relayed to Peck in Suffolk. "A few minutes" later, Lieutenant Thayer saw the cavalry pickets riding into the main lines, riding barebacked. He signaled Peck, "Pickets driven in. Reinforcements needed." Thayer evacuated the signal post after coming under fire by Confederate sharpshooters.⁵⁰

The Confederates who drove Thayer from his position were General John B. Hood's men. They were able to capture some of the cavalry pickets and drive up the South Quay Road. The alertness of the Union troops and the lateness of the attack held the successes to a minimum. But the coming of night did allow the rest of the Confederate troops to reach Suffolk. The next morning General George Pickett's Division advanced on the Somerton Road. Other troops advanced on the Edenton Road and the Providence Church [or Windsor] Road.

The citizens of Suffolk were aware of the Confederates almost as soon as the Union troops in the town were made aware of them. Mrs. Ferguson writes about the reaction of the Federal troops:

Their appearance created the greatest commotion among the Federals, the whole army commenced to pour into our town from the surrounding country. Confederates began to move toward the town and force the Yankees to draw in their pickets. As they were forced

* a liberated or escaped slave

near town they fired (burned) every house as they passed along. Many families were allowed only five or 10 minutes to leave their houses. Those living several miles from here went into the Confederate lines, while those who lived nearer came to Suffolk to stay with friends....In Suffolk the greatest excitement prevailed. Couriers were straining their horses up and down the streets.

The noise became deafening, all the batteries around Suffolk were engaged in shelling the woods in every direction. The booming of cannon, the noise of bursting shells and the smoke of musketry combined made one continuous roar. The smoke from cannons and burning houses hung like thick clouds over our town which seemed doomed to destruction.

Heavy skirmishing was now going on and ambulances containing the wounded, whose groans were heart-rending, passed along our streets to the Main Street Methodist Church and the residence of Mrs. A.S. Darden nearly opposite, which had been converted into temporary hospitals.

Amid all this excitement and commotion couriers riding along the streets rattled at the windows of the houses and told the frightened inmates to hold themselves in readiness, for if the "rebels" came nearer town they intended to burn it and evacuate.⁵¹

Despite the fact that the Confederates advanced within artillery range of Suffolk, the Federal forces did not burn the town. General Peck did, however, send a message to Admiral S.P. Lee requesting naval cooperation. He also ordered the fortifications strengthened. On April 13 he noted in a message that according to "intelligent deserters" Longstreet had between 35,000 and 40,000 men facing him at Suffolk.⁵²

Heavy skirmishing continued on the 13th. The Union troops held the Confederates in check on the Somerton Road. On the Nansemond River Lieutenants William Cushing and Robert Lamson, assigned to keep the Confederates from crossing, were ordered not to let the vessels fall into "enemy" hands. At 4:20 P.M. on the 13th Lieutenant Cushing wrote Admiral Lee, "The Confederates are trying without doubt to surround General Peck." Fear continued to mount that Longstreet would force a

crossing on the Nansemond.⁵³

Contrary to Union opinion, Longstreet's men were not going to cross the Nansemond, but they were going to bathe in its tributary. The men could not resist the opportunity to swim in Reid's Ferry Creek, just below Longstreet's headquarters at La Compte's House, and in full view of the Union gunboats, one half a mile away.⁵⁴ While these men swam in Reid's Ferry Creek, their comrades were pushing down the Somerton Road. The one civilian to be killed in the Siege of Suffolk, Mrs. ^{George H.} Smith, was killed at this time while hiding in a woods with her children. Mrs. Smith and her four children had been hiding in the basement of their home, but the fire from artillery and muskets in fighting around the house had forced them into the woods for refuge. The bullet that caused Mrs. Smith to bleed to death came from an unknown infantryman. Whether he was Confederate or Federal has never been determined.⁵⁵

The fighting was not contained just to the front against the other side, but also spread into the interior of the two sides. Union Lieutenant-Colonel Edgar A. Kimball was shot dead by Union General Michael Corcoran. The Confederates were having their internal problems also. As he was nearing the town, Longstreet assigned all of the artillery to General Samuel French. French felt that his superior had taken away his troops to deprive him of an infantry command. The bitter French passed the artillery along to Hood and Pickett and reassumed command of his infantry. "French was angry and he seems to have remained that way about Suffolk the rest of his life."⁵⁶

These inter-army conflicts did not, however, inhibit the fighting. By April 13 the Confederates had blockaded the Nansemond River and placed masked batteries on the shore. These batteries posed a serious threat to the Federal fleet. The vessels that made up this fleet were primarily shallow draft, largely unmilitary craft. The Commodore Barney was a former New York harbor sidewheel ferryboat with field artillery mounted on the deck. A number of precautions had to be taken to protect these highly vulnerable vessels. Iron was used to protect the pilot house. Rifle screens were put up on the deck to stop musket balls.⁵⁷ These precautions did help protect the men and the pilots of the vessels, but in particularly intense fighting were unable to prevent heavy damage and casualties.

Both Lieutenants Cushing and Lamson wrote of discovering these masked batteries numerous times. On April 14 Lieutenant Lamson wrote, "As we turned the bend below Norfleet's Point, I discovered a fresh earthwork on the point and commenced shelling it; seeing nothing but riflemen behind it, I gave the signal to run past, and, when within 400 yards, the enemy opened fire from seven pieces of artillery which they rolled from the woods." The affair was very costly to the tiny fleet, with the Mount Washington so nearly destroyed that it had to be towed away. The Commodore Barney and the Stepping Stones were also involved in the engagement. The Federals suffered casualties of five killed, fourteen wounded, and one missing.⁵⁸

The early days of the siege were not without their humorous moments. Longstreet recalled one such incident in his memoirs which involved a curious Confederate foot soldier and a Federal signal post

that had been captured in the first fighting of the siege. The post consisted of a platform at the top of a pine tree. The Confederate soldier climbed to the top and "seated himself for a leisurely view of the Federal forces inside their works." The Union artillerists soon spotted the man and began to fire at the platform. When a shell came too close, the man stumbled from the platform, down the tree, and onto the ground. The embarrassed soldier decided on a scheme for revenge. "He carefully constructed a full sized man dressed in a new suit of improved 'butternut' dry goods, and, in ~~the~~ for^m christening him 'Julius Caesar,' took him to the platform, adjusted him to graceful position, and made him secure to the framework by strong cords." When the sun rose the Federals spotted "Julius Caesar" and began to fire at him. "The new soldier sat under the hot fire with irritating indifference until the Confederates, not able to restrain their hilarity, exposed the joke by calling for 'three cheers for Julius Caesar.' The other side quickly recognized the situation, and good naturedly added to ours their cheers for the old hero."⁵⁹

Unfortunately, much of the business at hand was not so amusing. Skirmishing continued on the 15th. A Federal advance on the Edenton Road drove the Confederates from one of their camps and brought back the camp equipage. The vessels on the Nansemond were again busy shelling camps and batteries. Three more members of the Federal fleet were wounded. On the 16th a Federal soldier guarding the wire to Norfolk was killed as small parties of Confederate soldiers attempted to cut the railroads leading to Norfolk. The rail lines themselves were patrolled and the raiders were kept from doing any

damage to them.

In the meantime, Longstreet continued to stretch and fortify his own line. Behind this line foraging parties and commissary agents swept the country in all directions for supplies, forage, and subsistence. Bacon and the famed Smithfield hams were sent North to the Army of Northern Virginia. For General Lee, who had said on January 26, that he had eight day's meat rations left and had virtually exhausted the supply of forage, this must have been a welcome relief.⁶⁰

With Longstreet tightening his lines and the threats of the small parties of Confederate raiders cutting the rail lines to Norfolk, Peck ordered restrictions on the citizens of the town. According to Mrs. Ferguson:

The Yankees now became stricter than ever with the people here. They were completely cut off from the outer world, allowed few privileges and no means of acquiring any information. No article of merchandise, however insignificant, was procurable without an order from the Provost Marshall. [sic] 61

One of the men Longstreet used to spot weaknesses in the Federal rear was James Harrison, the famous scout that would take the place of Stuart as eyes of the Army of Northern Virginia in the Gettysburg Campaign. General Longstreet wrote, "One night in the spring of 1863 I was sitting in my tent opposite Suffolk, Virginia, when there came in a slender, wiry fellow about five feet eight, with hazel eyes, dark hair and complexion, and brown beard. He wore a citizens suit of dark material, and...he handed me a note from Mr. Seddon, Secretary of War. That was my first meeting with

the famous scout, Harrison...[who] joined me at Chambersburg with information more accurate than a force of cavalry could have secured."⁶² Moxley Sorrel recalled that Harrison always brought accurate information that would always be confirmed afterward.⁶³

Meanwhile, on the front, Confederate misfortune was foreshadowed, when Lieutenant Lamson sent Admiral Lee a proposal for an attack on one of the strongest Confederate batteries on the Nansemond R., Fort Huger (Hill's Point, or simply "the Old Fort"). This was the fort that had threatened to sink the Federal fleet on April 14. The battery was just upstream from the mouth of Western Branch. The river ran only fifty yards from the fort's guns and was the key to the Upper Nansemond R. and thus Suffolk's water communications. The capture of this battery would silence a threat, in the opinion of the Federals, that could save Suffolk. The strength of these batteries was seen again in a fierce engagement which disabled the steering apparatus of one ship and killed its pilot.⁶⁴

On the 17th, Union General Terry's brigade continued to skirmish the Confederates. An engagement with them cost Terry three men killed and ten wounded. General French's engineer was captured by the Federals while laying out works. He quickly tore up a map he had when captured. Peck also expressed concern for the behavior of some of his own men. He sent his immediate superior a message containing the desire to shoot some of his men for cowardice. ⁶⁵

Yet another pilot was killed on a vessel under fire from

Confederate shore batteries. The powerful Confederate battery, Fort Huger, brimmed with five artillery pieces (two-24-pounder howitzers and three-12-pounder Napoleons) on April 19, under Captain Stribling. Two companies of the 55th North Carolina under Colonel Connally were camped several hundred yards behind the fort acting as a reserve for the entire line. Two companies of the 44th Alabama garrisoned the fort. The Alabamans expected to be relieved by the North Carolinians, but Connally did not know this. General French, whose command the fort came under, was sick and sent a Colonel to visit it. As a result of the confusion, the fort was unguarded in the immediate rear.

By coincidence, the plan offered by Lt. Lamson on the 17th was to take place at this time. At 5:30 P.M. 130 men from the 8th Connecticut and 140 men from the 89th New York embarked on the Stepping Stones. A canvas screen was used to conceal the men. The Confederates in the battery were expecting the vessel to attempt to run past it. General George Getty, the commander of the Federal troops, describes the action:

At 300 yards above the battery Lieutenant Lamson headed his boat inshore, but striking on a spile she glanced off, and, borne on the ebb-tide, was on the eve of shooting in front of the battery, when Lieutenant Lamson, with admirable presence of mind, reversed the paddle-wheels and backed her aground. The men jumped off from both ends of the boat up to their waists in mud and water, scrambled hastily ashore, and with a cheer dashed for the battery. In an instant Lieutenant Lamson had landed his howitzers and followed. The enemy, apprised of our approach by the cheers, opened a hot fire of musketry, and was enabled even to reverse and fire one of his guns; but seeing himself cut off, and receiving one or two discharges of canister from Lamson's howitzers, he surrendered. 66

The Confederates lost the five artillery pieces, seven officers, and 130 men, captured. The Federals lost four men killed and ten wounded. Pickets were quickly thrown out and rifle pits were dug. The gunboats kept up a moderate fire on the rear to hold back any Confederate counterattack.

The aftermath of the capture of Fort Huger was quite turbulent. The Confederate field commanders hurled charges and countercharges. Colonel Connally heard that General Law had said that Connally's men had behaved badly:

"I understand that you have reported that my regiment acted cowardly last night and fled before the enemy without fighting and in violation of orders; I wish to know if you so stated."

Law told Connally that he was merely stating what Captains Terrell and Cussons of his staff had reported.

"Well it's a damned lie," said Connally, "and I will see them about it."

Connally asked Terrell if he had made the report. Terrell said that he had and would not retract. Connally then turned to Cussons and asked him the same question.

"No, Colonel," he answered half regretfully, "I did not; but I will tell you what I now say: That if you gave your men orders to retire when the enemy appeared in their front, they obeyed damned promptly last night."

"I hold you responsible, sir, for that remark."

Connally then returned to his camp and explained the challenge to his men. Major A.H. Belo agreed to share the challenge to duel. The challenge was promptly delivered and accepted by Terrell and Cussons.

In due time it was agreed that Colonel Connally and Captain Terrell should use double-barrel shot guns, loaded with balls, and should face each other at forty yards. Captain Cussons cheerfully selected the more deadly Mississippi rifle at the same distance....Major Belo and Captain Cussons took their stations, which duly had been paced at forty yards. The Mississippi rifles were examined and loaded. Each man took his weapon. At the word, they fired. The bullet from Major Belo's rifle clipped a hole in Captain Cusson's hat. Cusson's return fire did not touch the Major, though the Englishman was a bull's-eye marksman.

Again the guns were loaded and handed by the seconds to the principals; again the order to 'Fire!' Major Belo winced slightly; Captain Cussons was unscathed. Said the Englishman with complete nonchalance, 'Major, this is damned poor shooting we are doing today. If we don't do any better than this we will never kill an Yankees!... Examination showed that the lead had grazed Belo's neck. Bleeding he was unsatisfied.

A third time the rifles were loaded when a messenger arrived with the news that Connally and Terrell had ^{been} reconciled. With this affair over, only Cusson's hat and Belo's neck had suffered. Whether or not Longstreet became aware of the duels is not known, officially or privately.⁶⁷

Then on April 21, largely due to a misunderstanding, Fort Huger was evacuated by the Federals. General Peck was under the impression that the gunboats would be withdrawn and that the position would then be untenable. Lieutenant Cushing had objected, but to no avail. In the meantime, the Confederates were investigating the affair. On April 22, General French wrote, "It appears to me that if the garrison was surprised, they were negligent; if not surprised, they did not offer sufficient resistance."⁶⁸ The strategic loss to the Confederates now that the fort had been evacuated was negligible. The loss

to prestige was much greater.

On the same day French wrote his report on Fort Huger, another intriguing event took place. Colonel John M. Stone explained the affair after the siege. Some freed negroes were told how to signal a gunboat to send out a small boat to pick them up. This was a frequent occurrence in which a boat was sent to pick negroes up or gather news and information. In this instance, a boat with five sailors was sent ashore. As they approached the shore they saw a party of Confederates. "Two of them raised their muskets to fire, at which time they were fired on by three men on shore, killing one and wounding another." The Union sailors then surrendered. "It was a signal to which they often responded, and the men captured did not regard it as a truce. In my opinion the proceedings were legitimate. The boat was only fired on in self defense."⁶⁹ At a time when others were using the strongest rhetoric, Colonel Stone boldly stated the facts.

The incident did provoke a retaliatory attack against the Confederates in the village of Chuckatuck. Lieutenant Cushing of the Federal navy led a force of ninety men and a howitzer out on the evening of April 22. The force encountered forty Confederate cavalrymen and defeated them, killing two and capturing three of their horses fully equipped, at a loss of one man killed. They also burned the homes and barns of three civilians who had "given active service to the rebel cause."⁷⁰

Encounters such as these began to convince the Federals that the Confederates were not at Suffolk merely to capture the town.

On April 24, Lt. Lamson wrote Admiral Lee, "From all the information I can get, I am more convinced that you are perfectly correct in your opinion that the attack on Suffolk is only a grand foraging expedition. I heard General Peck examine a deserter who came in this morning, and he said the rebel soldiers all said it was only a foraging expedition, and that wagons were running night and day carrying provisions of all kinds across their pontoon bridge on the Blackwater."⁷¹ Longstreet was clearly performing one of his most important missions.

A heavy reconnaissance also occurred on the 24th, against the Confederate lines on the Edenton Road. Union General Corcoran led the attack on the Confederate rifle pits, with about 5,000 men. The 800 to 1,000 Confederates were swept from the pits and four of them were taken prisoner. Since the object of the attack had been only to test and not to capture and hold the Confederate line, the Union forces returned to their own lines.

The Confederates themselves were quite busy. On April 25, General Peck noted that Longstreet had built a road to the Nansemond R. with the intention of crossing. The Confederates were also busy building up their own lines. Two forts were being constructed by the Confederates in front of Suffolk. At the end of the siege, Peck inspected these lines:

...not less than 10 miles of batteries, covered-ways, and rifle-pits have been thrown up; most of the artillery was protected by embrasures; the parapets were from 12 to 15 feet in thickness and well revetted, while the covered-ways were from 8 to 10 feet. Longstreet had a wire laid from the Blackwater, and telegraphed arrangements throughout his lines.⁷²

Lt. Lamson also had the opportunity to view the work of the Confederates:

I...was astonished at their strength and extent. They consist of rifle pits, redans, and batteries.... The rebel works are much stronger and more neatly finished than our own works of the same class.... On all the roads leading out of Suffolk they had several lines of entrenchments. The batteries near the Western Branch were half sunken works, and from their position and construction as formidable as earthworks can be made. 73

The Confederates were indeed well entrenched. They were not, however, destined to remain at Suffolk much longer. As late as April 27, Lee wrote to Longstreet suggesting that he strike a blow at Suffolk if the blow would be damaging.⁷⁴ But on April 30, news reached Longstreet of the grand offensive that Lee had feared most. Hooker and the Union Army of the Potomac were finally prepared to move on Lee. Longstreet immediately began recalling the supply wagons, foragers, and commissary agents that were scattered throughout the countryside of southern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. The task of regrouping and marching to Lee's aid was monumental, given the restlessness of the Federal forces bottled up in Suffolk.

This restlessness was made manifest when the Union troops under General Terry engaged the Confederates in front of Suffolk. This engagement cost the Federals four killed and forty-two wounded. The loss of the Confederates was unknown, but due to the severe shelling they received from Union Forts Nansemond, South Quay, and Rosecrans, the loss was thought to be great. The action on the Nansemond River was no less heated. A new battery was unmasked at

Le Compte's house, which fired on the Commodore Earney. By late afternoon, the battery had still not been silenced. The Federals continued to shell it. Lt. Lamson, also on the river, wrote Admiral Lee, "General Peck said he thought Longstreet was falling back."⁷⁵ Whether Peck knew or was unsure, he was certainly right about what Longstreet was about to do. May had settled turbulently on Suffolk.

May 3 brought still more pressure as Peck seemed to sense that Longstreet would soon be gone. A reconnaissance was made from the town itself against the Confederate flank. At 9:00 A.M. Union troops crossed the Suffolk draw bridge (over the Nansemond R.), and advanced slowly under the fire of Longstreet's sharpshooters. The artillery of the Union forts blazed, attempting to cover for the attack. This heavy fire continued all day against the Confederate line, which had to be heavily reinforced.

In conjunction with the other move, Major Crosby advanced on and occupied Chuckatuck, driving out 300 Confederate cavalymen. His force of infantry, a section of artillery, and eleven mounted rifles, pushed on to Reid's Ferry, capturing sixteen prisoners. Yet another detachment moved out of Fort Huger until it met stubborn resistance and retired to the fort again. The day was not without its cost in men. Colonel Ringold (103rd N.Y.) died of wounds received while leading his men in some of the day's fighting.

During the night of the 3rd, the Confederates under Longstreet started moving out of their trenches and back across the Blackwater to join Lee. Longstreet set a strong picket to prevent stragglers

or contrabands from getting through to the Federals. This enabled the Confederates to obtain a respite of a few hours. When the retreat was discovered, Union Generals Corcoran and Dodge began to pursue on the Edenton Road, while Colonel Foster followed on the Somerton Road. Foster met the Confederate rear guard at 6 A.M.. Other units continued to press the retreating Confederates. The Siege of Suffolk had ended.

CHAPTER IV

The Aftermath of The Siege

The Siege of Suffolk was destined to be eclipsed by the great battle of Chancellorsville and the death there, of "Stonewall" Jackson. The sieges that would follow, Vicksburg, Petersburg, would be far more extensive and far more costly. But for the people involved, the Siege of Suffolk was a matter of great importance. For the citizens it was a harrowing view of war at close hand. For the Federals it was a successful repulse of a larger force, while holding that force away from Lee long enough to give Hooker the overwhelming advantage at Chancellorsville. For the Confederates the siege was a disappointment militarily, a success in gathering food and forage and in protecting the capital from the Southeast.

The cost in men and material, while not great, was substantial for the type of campaign Suffolk was designed to be. The Confederates lost five artillery pieces from the famous Fauquier Artillery at Fort Huger, 400 prisoners, some rifles, and camp equipage. General Peck estimated the Confederate casualties at 500-600 killed and wounded and 500 deserted. Peck stated his own losses as forty-four killed, 202 wounded, and fourteen missing, a total of 260 men hors de combat. The losses of the Union navy near the end of the fighting were nine killed, sixteen wounded, and four captured.

The toll in property was great. Many of the outlying houses were burned or shelled. Private homes and churches in the town were used as hospitals or headquarters. The countryside had been stripped of supplies, forage, subsistence, and even rails, which were taken by the quartermaster department for the iron.⁷⁶ Fields

that should have been planted with crops were thrown up into massive field fortifications. River commerce had ceased. Even the size of the town's population had shrunk, from 1,395 in 1860 to less than 300 at the close of the siege.⁷⁷

Some critics have called the Suffolk Campaign wasteful and fruitless. One called it "A Series of Poorly Executed & Unco-ordinated Military Maneuvers Carried on by a Motley Collection of Misfits & Malcontents."⁷⁸ But to the participants the Suffolk Campaign was much different. General Peck wrote, "The rules and regulations prescribed by military authorities for the conduct of siege operations have been observed."⁷⁹ Another writer calls Suffolk "one of the most interesting chapters of the war."⁸⁰ For those who fought, lived, or died at Suffolk, the campaign would never be forgotten.

APPENDIX A

In A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, John B. Jones left a record of prices of common items that gives both an idea of the scarcity of these items by their high costs and the difficulty of paying for them. Since the Confederate commissary agents paid farmers for the goods they impressed, this list also gives an idea of the cost the Confederate government had to pay two months before the investment of Suffolk.

Prices Paid for Common Military and Civilian Supplies

Agricultural Produce	Before the war	February 1, 1863
White wheat, per bushel	\$1.50	\$ 4.50
Flour, per barrel	7.50	22.00
Corn, per bushel	.70	3.50
Hay, per hundred	1.00	3.50
Beef, per pound	.08	.50
Bacon, per pound	.13	.60
Lard, per pound	.15	1.00
Butter, per pound	.30	1.50
Irish potatoes	1.00	5.00
Apple Brandy	1.00	15.00
Wool, per pound	.30	2.00
Miscellaneous		
Coarse shoes	\$1.50	\$15.00
Boots	7.50	60.00
Wool hats, per dozen	7.00	50.00
Leather, sole, per pound	.25	2.50
Leather, upper, per pound	.33	3.50

Beef rose to \$1.25 per pound on March 1

Flour rose to \$30.00 per barrel on March 3, \$38.00 on March 22

Bacon rose to \$1.50 per pound on March 14

Potatoes rose to \$12.00 per bushel on March 14, \$16.00 on March 30

APPENDIX B

Return of Union Casualties

Siege of Suffolk, Virginia

	Killed		Wounded		Captured or Missing	
	off.	men	off.	men	off.	men
Brig. Gen. Michael Corcoran's Division	-	5	6	45	-	1
Brig. Gen. Henry D. Terry's Brigade	-	2	-	10	-	-
Colonel Robert S. Foster's Brigade	-	2	4	23	-	1
Colonel Mathew Murphy's Brigade	-	1	2	12	-	-
Brig. Gen. George W. Getty's Division	3	20	8	102	-	-
Colonel Rush C. Hawkins' Brigade	1	5	3	24	-	-
Brig. Gen. Edward Harland's Brigade	-	10	3	41	-	-
Colonel Arthur H. Dutton's Brigade	2	5	2	34	-	-
Light Artillery	-	-	-	3	-	-
Colonel William Gurney's Division	-	-	-	-	-	-
Colonel Burr Porter's Brigade	-	-	-	-	-	-
Colonel Robert S. Hughston's Brigade	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reserve Brigade-Colonel David W. Wardrop	-	13	4	54	-	-
Cavalry	-	-	-	4	-	-
Artillery (Heavy and Light)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total for Union Army at Suffolk						
General John J. Peck	3	38	18	205	-	4
Aggregate-266 officers and men						

Union Officers killed in the Siege of Suffolk

Captain Bowdish-commissary-killed in railroad accident (April 8)
 Lt. Col. Edgar A Kimball-9th N.Y. Vols.-killed by Brig. Gen. Corcoran (April 12)
 2nd Lieut. B. Conron-13th Ind. Vols.-killed by sharpshooters (April 24)
 Reverend Francis E. Butler-Chaplan-25th N.J.-while carrying water to wounded
 Colonel Benjamin Ringold-103rd N.H. Vols.
 Captain Lewis H. Buzzell-13th N.H. Vols.

NOTES

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³Emma L.M. Ferguson, The Occupation of Suffolk by the Yankees (cited in The Suffolk News-Herald, Kermit Hobbs, April 1, 1973), pp. 1, 6.

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⁶John P. Dyer, The Gallant Hood (Indianapolis, Indiana, Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1950), p. 168.

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⁸*Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁹Douglas Southall Freeman, Robert E. Lee, A Biography (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 495.

¹⁰Richard D. Goff, Confederate Supply (Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1969), p. 72.

¹¹Jones, pp. 187-188.

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¹³G. Moxley Sorrel, Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer (Jackson, Tennessee, McCowat-Mereer Press, Inc., 1958), p. 144.

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¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁸Freeman, Lieutenants, pp. 476-477.

19O.R. Armies, v. 18, p. 275.

20David Brigman Sanger, James Longstreet: I. Soldier (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1952), pp. 121-122.

21Ibid., pp. 120-121.

22Dyer, p. 162.

23Ibid., pp. 164-166.

24George Edward Pickett, Soldier of the South: General Pickett's War Letters to his Wife, Arthur Crew Inman, ed. (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1928), p. 32.

25Sorrel, pp. 146-147.

26O.R. Armies, v. 18, pp. 943-944.

27Ibid., p. 574.

28Frank Moore, The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc. (New York, Arno Press, A New York Times Co., 1977), p. 292.

29O.R. Armies, v. 18, p. 556.

30Ibid., p. 605.

31Ibid., p. 871.

32Ibid., pp. 926-927.

33Ibid., p. 927.

34Ibid., p. 933.

35Ibid., p. 942.

36Ibid., pp. 943-944.

37Ibid., p. 950.

38Eckenrode and Conrad, pp. 151-167. Some historians and biographers have used Longstreet's calls for more men, just before the Siege of Suffolk, as evidence that he actually intended to make himself the premier Confederate commander in Virginia. These men see Suffolk as the excuse for drawing more men from Lee to satiate Longstreet's unbounded ambitions. A careful reading of the Official Records, unaffected by private prejudices, will show a cautious, overworried commander, in his first independent command, sincerely afraid that he could not succeed without additional troops.

Furthermore, Union General Peck, at Suffolk, fearing an attack, was occupied with precisely the same action. Yet, despite this similarity, history has failed to accuse Peck of unbridled ambition. Both Longstreet and Peck operated from an unsatisfactory intelligence system from which both deemed additional men a necessity. Neither commander was attempting to make his army the largest on their respective sides.

39Jones, p. 185.

40O.R. Armies, v. 18, pp. 958-959.

41Ibid., pp. 958-959.

42Ibid., pp. 959-960.

43Ibid., pp. 961-962.

44Ibid., p. 963.

45Ibid., p. 963.

46Ibid., pp. 967-968.

47Ibid., pp. 969-970.

48Ibid., p. 275.

49Elizabeth Curtis Wallace, Glencoe Diary: The War-Time Journal of Elizabeth Curtis Wallace, Eleanor P. and Charles E. Cross, Jr., ed. (Chesapeake, Virginia, Norfolk County Historical Society, 1968), p. 25.

50O.R. Armies, v. 18, pp. 272-273.

51Ferguson, Suffolk News-Herald, April 8, p. 11.

52O.R. Armies, v. 18, p. 605.

53Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion (Series 1, Vol. 8, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1889), pp. 717-718.

54Holland, p. 5.

55Ibid., p. 10.

56Dyer, p. 171.

57O.R. Navies, v. 8, p. 718.

58Ibid., p. 723.

59James Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America (Dallas, Texas, The Dallas Publishing Co., 1896), pp. 325-326.

60Goff, pp. 107-108.

61Ferguson, Suffolk News-Herald, April 8, p. 11.

62Thomas Yoseloff, Battles and Leaders of the Civil War: Retreat From Gettysburg (Vol. 3, New York, Thomas Yoseloff, Inc.; 1956), p. 244.

63Sorrel, p. 147.

64O.R. Navies, v. 8, pp. 735-736.

65O.R. Armies, v. 18, pp. 628, 630, 632-633.

66Ibid., p. 304.

67Freeman, Lieutenants, pp. 487-490.

68O.R. Armies, v. 18, p. 325.

69O.R. Navies, v. 8, p. 763.

70Ibid., pp. 770-772.

71Ibid., pp. 773-774.

72O.R. Armies, v. 18, p. 278.

73O.R. Navies, v. 8, p. 795.

74O.R. Armies, v. 18, pp. 1024-1025.

75Ibid., p. 784.

76Ibid., p. 329. The rails were sent back to Richmond.

77Ann H. Burton, History of Suffolk and Nansemond County Virginia (Suffolk, Virginia; Phelps Ideas!, 1970), p. 45.

78Dyer, p. 167.

79O.R. Armies, v. 18, p. 278.

80Moore, p. 290.

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Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion, Series 1, Vol. 18. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902. No study of any segment of the military events of the American Civil War would be complete without the Official Records. Vol. 18 proved of inestimable value in this study.

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Articles

Bakeless, John, "James Harrison: Rebel Enigma," Civil War Times Illustrated, Vol. 9, No. 1, April, 1970, pp. 12-15, 18-20. This article, while not specifically useful for the purposes of this study, does provide some of the answers about this mysterious scout Longstreet first met at Suffolk.



Department of History

4 March 1980

Dr. Albert C. Dawson
Modern Foreign Languages Department
University of Richmond
Virginia 23173

Dear Al:

Enclosed is Brian Steel Wills' paper, "The Suffolk Campaign: A Case Study," along with his abstract of the paper.

Brian Wills is an Honors student in history. His paper examines the struggle in the Tidewater town of Suffolk during the Civil War and explores the economic and human dimensions of this campaign.

I am pleased to nominate Mr. Wills for the forthcoming Phi Beta Kappa Inter-collegiate Forum on March 29, 1980. Not only does his paper show a command of the material and an understanding of the military leaders involved, but he also was able to present it enthusiastically and with clarity before the class. I think he will be a good representative of our University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frances".

Frances W. Gregory
Professor of History

FWG:rhs
Encl.